

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 1329

Introduced by Assembly Member Levine

February 21, 2003

An act relating to public utilities.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1329, as introduced, Levine. Public Utilities Commission.

Existing law establishes a Public Utilities Commission, with powers and duties relating to public utilities, including the authority to establish its own procedures, subject to statute and due process, the duty to enforce provisions of law affecting public utilities, and certain adjudicative powers.

This bill would state the intent of the Legislature to develop, in subsequent amendments, consistent and organized processes within the commission for its proceedings, and for its enforcement and adjudicative functions.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no. State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the
- 2 following:
- 3 (1) In 1911 California established by constitutional
- 4 amendment the Railroad Commission. In 1912, the Legislature
- 5 enacted the Public Utilities Act (Division 1 (commencing with
- 6 Section 201) of the Public Utilities Code), expanding the Railroad
- 7 Commission's regulatory authority to include natural gas, electric,



1 telephone, and water companies as well as railroads and marine
2 transportation companies. In 1946, the Railroad Commission was
3 renamed the California Public Utilities Commission.

4 (2) The Public Utilities Commission regulates privately owned
5 telecommunications, electric, natural gas, water, railroad, rail
6 transit, and passenger transportation companies. The Public
7 Utilities Commission is responsible for ensuring that California
8 public utility customers have safe, reliable public utility service at
9 reasonable rates, protecting customers from fraud, and promoting
10 the health of California's economy.

11 (3) In pursuing these goals, the Public Utilities Commission
12 establishes service standards and safety rules, and authorizes
13 utility rate changes. It monitors the safety of public utility and
14 transportation operations, and oversees markets to inhibit
15 anticompetitive activity.

16 (4) In its efforts to protect consumers, the Public Utilities
17 Commission prosecutes unlawful public utility marketing and
18 billing activities, governs business relationships between public
19 utilities and their affiliates, and resolves complaints by customers
20 against public utilities.

21 (5) The Public Utilities Commission implements energy
22 efficiency programs, low-income rates, and telecommunications
23 services for disabled customers. It oversees the merger and
24 restructure of public utility corporations, and enforces the
25 California Environmental Quality Act (Division 13 (commencing
26 with Section 21000) of the Public Resources Code) for public
27 utility construction. The Public Utilities Commission works with
28 other state and federal agencies in promoting water quality,
29 environmental protection and safety. It also intervenes in federal
30 proceedings on issues that affect California public utility rates or
31 services.

32 (6) The Office of Ratepayer Advocates is an independent arm
33 of the Public Utilities Commission that represents consumers in
34 Public Utilities Commission proceedings, pursuant to statute. The
35 Public Utilities Commission also has a public advisor who assists
36 the public in participating in Public Utilities Commission
37 proceedings, and a unit that is charged with informally resolving
38 consumer complaints.

39 (b) It is the intent of the Legislature to develop, in subsequent
40 amendments, consistent and organized processes within the Public

- 1 Utilities Commission for its proceedings, and for its enforcement
- 2 and adjudicative functions.

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